

TORREY JAMES LUCE

# Livy

*The Composition of His History*

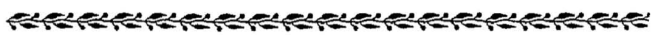


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# LIVY

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The Composition of His History

*by* T. J. LUCE

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*Dedicated to Marvin Mandelbaum*



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## Preface

I WISH to thank Princeton University for its generous leave policy, which has enabled me over the past few years to complete this book, and for a grant of money to defray the expense of the final typescript. In addition, I have benefitted from the comments and criticisms of Professors B. C. Fenik, E. Gabba, E. S. Gruen, and R. E. A. Palmer, who read parts of the present study, and of James P. Lipovsky, who read all of it. I particularly wish to thank Professor Konrad Gries, one of the readers selected by Princeton University Press, for his detailed suggestions for improvement. Naturally none of the above is responsible for errors that may remain or for the views expressed.

The histories of Livy and Polybius are cited frequently in this study. In the interest of simplicity and clarity book numbers of these authors are given in arabic numerals, italicized; italics are not used for numbers of chapters or subsections: e.g. Livy 38. 38.18; Pol. 16. 1. When referring to Polybius' extant text, I have abbreviated the author's name as Pol.; when referring to passages in Livy based on Polybius, the initial P alone is used. The initial R denotes passages in Livy based on Roman sources.

—T. J. Luce  
*Princeton, June 1976*



## Abbreviations

*Periodicals are abbreviated according to the system used in L'Année Philologique. Short abbreviations for works frequently cited are listed below.*

Bayet, <i>Livre I</i>	J. Bayet, <i>Tite-Live, Histoire romaine. Livre I<sup>r</sup></i> (Paris 1961).
Briscoe, <i>Comm.</i>	J. Briscoe, <i>A Commentary on Livy. Books XXXI–XXXIII</i> (Oxford 1973).
Burck, <i>Einführung</i>	E. Burck, <i>Einführung in die dritte Dekade des Livius</i> (Heidelberg 1950).
Burck, <i>Erzählungskunst</i>	E. Burck, <i>Die Erzählungskunst des T. Livius</i> (Berlin 1934; repr. with a new introduction, Berlin/Zürich 1964).
CAH	<i>The Cambridge Ancient History.</i>
CSEL	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</i> , ed. P. Guenther.
FGH	F. Jacoby, <i>Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i> (Berlin and Leiden 1923– ).
Hellmann, <i>L–I</i>	F. Hellmann, <i>Livius-Interpretationen</i> (Berlin 1939).
Hoch, <i>Darstellung</i>	H. Hoch, <i>Die Darstellung der politischen Sendung Roms bei Livius</i> (Frankfurt 1951).
Holleaux, <i>Études</i>	M. Holleaux, <i>Études d'épigraphie et d'histoire grecques</i> , vol. 5 (Paris 1957).

# ABBREVIATIONS

HRR	H. Peter, <i>Historicorum Romanorum Reliquiae</i> <sup>2</sup> , vol. 1 (Leipzig 1914); vol. 2 (Leipzig 1916).
Jal, <i>Livres XLI-XLII</i>	P. Jal, <i>Tite-Live, Histoire romaine. Livres XLI-XLII</i> , vol. 31 (Paris 1971).
Kahrstedt, <i>Annalistik</i>	U. Kahrstedt, <i>Die Annalistik von Livius. B. XXXI-XLV</i> (Berlin 1913).
Klotz, <i>Livius</i>	A. Klotz, <i>Livius und seine Vorgänger. Neue Wege zur Antike</i> (Leipzig/Berlin 1940-1941; repr. Amsterdam 1964).
MRR	T. R. S. Broughton, <i>The Magistrates of the Roman Republic</i> , vol. 1 (New York 1951); vol. 2 (New York 1952); <i>Supplement</i> (New York 1960).
Nissen, <i>KU</i>	H. Nissen, <i>Kritische Untersuchungen über die Quellen der vierten und fünften Dekade des Livius</i> (Berlin 1863).
Ogilvie, <i>Comm.</i>	R. M. Ogilvie, <i>A Commentary on Livy, Books 1-5</i> (Oxford 1965).
ORF <sup>2</sup>	<i>Oratorum Romanorum Fragmenta</i> <sup>2</sup> , ed. H. Malcovati (Pavia 1955).
Pédech, <i>Méthode</i>	P. Pédech, <i>La Méthode historique de Polybe</i> (Paris 1964).
Petzold, <i>Eröffnung</i>	K.-E. Petzold, <i>Die Eröffnung des zweiten römisch-makedonischen Krieges</i> (Berlin 1940; repr. Darmstadt n.d.).
RE	<i>Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft</i> .
Walbank, <i>Comm.</i>	F. W. Walbank, <i>A Historical Commentary on Polybius</i> , vol. 1 (Oxford 1957); vol. 2 (Oxford 1967).

# ABBREVIATIONS

Walsh, <i>Livy</i>	P. G. Walsh, <i>Livy, His Historical Aims and Methods</i> (Cambridge 1961).
Weissenborn	W. Weissenborn and H. J. Muller, <i>T. Livi Ab Urbe Condita Libri</i> (Berlin 1860-64; 2d ed. 1880).
Wille, <i>Aufbau</i>	G. Wille, <i>Der Aufbau des Livianischen Geschichtswerks</i> (Amsterdam 1973).
Witte, <i>Darstellung</i>	K. Witte, "Über die Form der Darstellung in Livius' Geschichtswerk," <i>RhM</i> 65 (1910) 270-305, 359-419; repr. separately (Darmstadt 1969).
Zimmerer, <i>CQ</i>	M. Zimmerer, <i>Der Annalist Qu. Claudius Quadrigarius</i> (Munich 1937).



## Introduction

IN THE nineteenth and early part of the present century Livy was the subject of much scholarly attention, particularly in Germany. Study of the historian's sources dominated the field, although valuable work was also done on topics such as his latinity and style. But after a time the spate of Quellenforschung began to abate, partly because the material was nearing exhaustion, partly because the Quellenforscher began to bicker among themselves, and partly because some began to have misgivings about the validity of some of their methods and results. But by and large, as the era of Source Criticism drew to its close, most viewed the results as a solid and convincing achievement. P. G. Walsh, in an excellent and judicious book published in 1961, gave voice to the communal opinion: "After more than a hundred years of systematic research (chiefly by German scholars), the boundaries between reasonable certainty and ingenious speculation are now closely defined."<sup>1</sup>

The waning of Quellenforschung caused Livian studies to languish somewhat for a time; recently, however, interest has revived, particularly in Great Britain. The achievements of P. G. Walsh, A. H. McDonald, R. M. Ogilvie, and J. Briscoe stand out, and major studies by other scholars are announced or forthcoming. The renaissance we are now experiencing has mostly turned away from Quellenforschung (although it has built on its results or is strongly influenced by them) and is no longer dominated by one or two topics of interest. Diversity is clearly in evidence; we are witnessing new advances in establishing the text, full

<sup>1</sup> Walsh, *Livy* 114. M. L. W. Laistner, *The Greater Roman Historians* (Berkeley 1947), is the major dissenter.



commentaries, and in studying Livy's literary techniques.<sup>2</sup>

Most of the new scholarship has tended in one of two directions. The first is chiefly concerned with consolidation and integration; Walsh's book mentioned above and Ogilvie's *Commentary* on Books 1-5 are excellent examples. The other is concerned with coming to a better understanding of particulars, whether they be analyses of individual parts of the history, investigations into special literary techniques and narrative devices, or thematic studies that focus on questions such as Livy's allegiance to the Augustan regime.<sup>3</sup> In much of this scholarship, however, Livy himself has been largely lost sight of; the question of his own contribution has been either ignored or considered of secondary importance. This was especially true when the tide of *Quellenforschung* was flowing strong, for on all sides it pointed to Livy's total dependence on his sources in matters of fact, for the ordering and development of material, for many of the ideas and interpretations expressed and for most of those implied, and to some extent even in vocabulary and style. On this last point, however, almost all were willing to credit him with being a fine stylist in

<sup>2</sup> A. H. McDonald issued a new Oxford text of Books 31-35 in 1965; it is to be hoped that Books 36-45 will be forthcoming; T. A. Dorey has produced a new Teubner text of Books 21-22 (1971). R. M. Ogilvie has contributed much to the text of Books 1-5, and a new Oxford text is the result (1973). New commentaries are by R. M. Ogilvie on Books 1-5 (cited as Ogilvie, *Comm.*), and J. Briscoe on Books 31-33 (cited as Briscoe, *Comm.*). On literary studies, in addition to Walsh's book, see his article in *RhM* 97 (1954) 97-114, and A. H. McDonald, "The Style of Livy" *JRS* 47 (1957) 155-172. Walsh has recently written a general assessment of Livy in the light of recent scholarship: *Livy, Greece and Rome. New Surveys in the Classics*, No. 8 (Oxford 1974).

<sup>3</sup> For examples of individual episodes, see Walsh, *Livy* 249-253; T. J. Luce, *TAPhA* 102 (1971) 265-302; for special narrative devices, J.-P. Chausserie-Laprée, *L'Expression narrative chez les historiens latins* (Paris 1969); for Livy's loyalties, R. Syme, *HSPb* 64 (1959) 27-87; H. J. Mette, *Gymnasium* 68 (1961) 269-285; H. Petersen, *TAPhA* 92 (1961) 440-452; Walsh, *PACA* 4 (1961) 26-37.

his own right and to believe that the rhetoric of the speeches, the prominence given to episodes illustrative of old-time virtues, and scenes of high drama and vivid presentment were also chiefly the historian's own doing. These views are not much changed today. Livy is a stylist, not an interpreter—a writer concerned with producing a dignified, stimulating history of his people that would rival those of the great historians of Greece: "He writes . . . to enshrine in literature persons and events that have given him a thrill of excitement as he studied them."<sup>4</sup> Scholars believe that Livy also saw himself in this light, and when he declares in the Preface that new writers invariably believe they can either bring new and more reliable facts to light or surpass their predecessors in the eloquence of their presentation, it was the second goal he chose for himself, not the first.<sup>5</sup>

The historian's personal contribution to his history has been judged almost entirely in terms of individual scenes and episodes. According to this view, when he came upon passages in his sources that lent themselves to fine writing and exciting reading, he proceeded to reshape and color the material according to his own interests and predilections; for the more pedestrian material in the intervals he hastily and rather mechanically reproduced what he found in the sources before him.<sup>6</sup> Kurt Witte, in a pioneering work showing how Livy adapted Polybius according to single episodes

<sup>4</sup> Ogilvie, *Comm.* 24-25.

<sup>5</sup> Praef. 2: *Novi semper scriptores aut in rebus certius aliquid allaturos se aut scribendi arte rudem vetustatem superaturos credunt.* That Livy was inspired by Cicero's complaint of the lack of a great national history and the need to rival the Greeks in this department of literature (*De or.* 2. 55. 62-64; *De leg.* 1. 5-6) is altogether probable. That Livy was not the man Cicero was seeking may be true, although I doubt that Cicero would have found Tacitus more congenial: cf. E. Rawson, *JRS* 62 (1972) 44-45.

<sup>6</sup> This is Walsh's appraisal of Livy's use of Polybius in the later books (*Livy* 144): "A clear and somewhat damning picture emerges of a mind rapidly and mechanically transposing the Greek, and coming to full consciousness only when grappling with the more congenial problems of literary presentation."

(Einzelerzählungen), sums up as follows: "The question may briefly be raised at this point as to whether particular groups of such episodes (and thereby larger sections of Livy's history) are arranged to form integrated units. The answer is no. Just as Livy began the composition of his work without having prepared himself much in advance and in particular failed to give at the start an outline of the contents, so he passed hurriedly from event to event, from scene to scene without taking the trouble to combine the separate accomplishments of the Roman people into larger, integrated units."<sup>7</sup> With one notable exception,<sup>8</sup> this fairly sums up scholarly opinion. Professor Syme has perhaps best expressed the *communis opinio*: "Admirable as Livy is in the eloquence of a speech, in descriptive colouring, and in narrative movement, he shows no comparable skill when events have to be grouped and interrelated—and no instinct for historical structure. For disposition as for material he is content on the whole to follow his sources."<sup>9</sup>

This book is in part concerned with testing the truth of these assertions. It will examine to what extent Livy tried to organize and structure his history according to larger units: the book, the pentad, and groups of pentads. Two additional problems are necessarily involved. The first concerns how Livy went about the actual process of composition: in particular, what his different methods of adapta-

<sup>7</sup> "Über die Form der Darstellung in Livius' Geschichtswerk," *RhM* 65 (1910) 418-419, reprinted separately (Darmstadt 1969) 96-97: "Hier sei nur noch die eine Frage kurz erörtert, ob bestimmte Gruppen solcher Einzelerzählungen und damit grössere Abschnitte des livianischen Geschichtswerkes unter sich geschlossene Einheiten bilden. Die Antwort lautet: nein. Wie Livius ohne längere Vorbereitungen an die Ausführung seines Werks ging und vor allem es unterliess, im voraus eine Gesamtdisposition zu entwerfen, so eilte er rasch von Ereignis zu Ereignis, von Szene zu Szene, ohne sich die Zusammenfassung der einzelnen Taten des römischen Volkes zu grösseren Einheiten angelegen sein zu lassen."

<sup>8</sup> E. Burck, *Erzählungskunst*, concerns the design and structure of Books 1-5.

<sup>9</sup> R. Syme, *Tacitus* (Oxford 1958) 1, 148 (cf. 139).

tion were, how far he had read ahead in his sources before beginning to write, and the reasons for his selection of sources and for his shifting back and forth among them as he did. The second concerns the problem of the way in which he tended to view and interpret the course of Roman history. The problem arises because a study that focuses on structure and on methods of composition inevitably raises questions about the division of history into epochs and the selection of major turning points within them. These questions also involve consideration of the meaning and significance that Livy found in the seven and a half centuries of Roman history he wrote about. Essentially, then, this is a study of how and to what extent Livy can be said to have "informed" his history.

No doubt many knowledgeable students of Livy will shake their heads in dismay at this proposal. Livy the Stylist, Livy the Narrative Artist, and Livy the Rhetorician are topics of hope and promise; Livy the Organizer and Livy the Thinker are not. The results of *Quellenforschung*, as noted above, seem at variance with the first possibility: Livy's dependence on his sources is nearly total; he trusts himself to follow only one at a time (rather than producing a conflation), and when he is forced to alternate among several over long stretches, an appalling pastiche could sometimes result: skewed chronology, contradictions, the same story repeated twice, cross-references to stories told not at all. It would seem improbable that a conscious attempt at organization could produce this sort of thing. On the other hand, Livy the Thinker has been equally discountenanced. He seldom expresses his own ideas, preferring to retire behind the persons and events he writes about. It has been charged that on the few occasions when he does speak in his own person, he trots out commonplaces and clichés; they may be deeply felt, but they are unoriginal and superficial.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, we find him deploring the ugliness of the present and avowedly preferring a romanticized past

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Ogilvie's remarks on the Preface, *Comm.* 23.

## INTRODUCTION

—the product partly of his own imagining, ignorance, and wishful thinking (e.g. Praef. 4–12, 26.22). There is no evidence that he was ever a senator or involved in public life; hence his treatment of the workings and traditions of government betrays ignorance and naiveté. Moreover, we even find him taking over the ideas of his sources as if they were his own—sometimes to the point of parroting judgments to which he supposedly does not subscribe, or on one occasion transferring the ideas of his source on the importance of an event to the words and thoughts of the crowd that witnessed it.<sup>11</sup> And as for having ideas about change and development in Roman history, few have found reason to suppose that Livy had any. Some in fact have denied that he was conscious of historical change at all. R. G. Collingwood in his *The Idea of History* asserts that all the ancient historians were tainted with the sin of “substantialism,” by which he means the failure to account for how things come into being, develop, and pass away; rather, the ancients were concerned chiefly with unchanging verities that lie outside history and that history cannot explain: the gods, human nature, the concept of Eternal Rome, and so forth. Collingwood believes that for Livy “Rome is a substance, changeless and eternal. From the beginning of the narrative Rome is ready-made and complete. To the end of the narrative she has undergone no spiritual change.”<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> An example of the former is given by Nissen (*KU* 249) in reference to the passage at 42.30.2–7 (based on Polybius): of the three groups of Greek leaders during the war with Perseus, some favored the king, some the Romans, and some wished to maintain a balance of power between Rome and Perseus; Polybius clearly counted himself among this third group. Livy calls this the *pars . . . optima et prudentissima*, rather than the faction favoring the Roman cause. Yet it is unreasonable to expect him to extoll the pro-Roman faction, most of whose members were only interested in using Rome as a power base for their own selfish ends (30.2–3). The second example is at 33.33.5–8 (Pol. 18.46.13–15): the proclamation of the freedom of Greece at the Isthmian Games.

<sup>12</sup> R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (Oxford 1946) 44.

This pronouncement is admittedly extreme, and one wonders about Collingwood's reading of Livy's Preface; nevertheless, no one has ventured to dispute the underlying premise that Livy was largely oblivious to historical development.

Particular scenes and episodes, then, have excited admiration, but not the history as a whole, although the 142 books may impress by virtue of their sheer number. And little respect has been accorded to Livy's critical abilities. Indeed, the general feeling is that he was a romantic novelist who wandered into history by default. There are, of course, reasons for this. Two examples come to mind. The first concerns the opening of Book 21 and the outbreak of the war with Hannibal. At 6. 3 Livy dates the fall of Saguntum to the consulship of P. Cornelius Scipio and Ti. Sempronius Longus: 218 B.C. By chapter 15 (3-6) he realizes that something is not right; it seems, he tells us, that he may have started the narrative in the wrong year. He speculates for a few lines about what might have gone wrong: maybe all the events took a shorter span of time than he said they did, or maybe the siege of Saguntum occurred in the previous year and only its fall took place in 218. He then abruptly abandons the puzzle, leaving the narrative as he wrote it (and begins the next section with *sub idem fere tempus* . . . : 16. 1).<sup>13</sup> The second example concerns the notorious Trials of the Scipios in Book 38 (50. 4-60. 10). For five chapters Livy reproduces the version of the historian Valerius Antias (50. 5). At a point roughly two-thirds of the way through the story he interrupts to inform us that there is absolutely no agreement among the authorities he has consulted, including Antias, on even the most basic facts he has just told and that he has no idea whom or what to believe (56. 1). After discussing some of the knottier problems for two chapters, he returns to Antias' account in order to finish off the story (58. 1-60. 10).<sup>14</sup>

It is passages such as these that have produced the crush-

<sup>13</sup> For a discussion, see pp. 141-142.

<sup>14</sup> For an analysis, see pp. 92-104, 142-143.

ing verdict of incompetence in his chosen field. The cause of such imperfections, it is universally felt, is due not to his failure to adapt satisfactorily the single source before him, but to his alternating over long stretches among two or more sources that disagreed with each other on essential points of fact and interpretation. The chief evidence for this view comes from Books 31-45, where we possess an original source (Polybius) and where line-by-line comparison shows that Livy has by and large done a faithful, competent job of transmission; but when he tries to alternate between Polybius and Roman sources, he can be shown to be guilty of gross errors and contradictions. This fact, of course, means not only that Livy is a faithful mirror of single sources, but also—since he did not possess the critical acumen to solve the problems inherent in combining them—that he is a faithful mirror of the differences among the sources, and thus also of the points where the switch was made from one to another. Hence the picture of Livy functioning as a kind of “Transparent Overlay.”

Livy the Wanderer is its companion. That is, he had not read ahead very far in the sources before he began his adaptation, but wandered from one to another, uncertain as to exactly what was coming up next or where the narrative would lead. This seems to be the case in both the examples cited above, for they appear to show that only after he had completed most of his adaptation did he become aware that part or all of what he had written must be wrong. And so transparent (or lazy) was he that he forbore to correct the errors that he had already committed to paper.

After prolonged exposure to passages of this sort and to the strictures on them by the Source Critics, most readers of Livy come to believe that the man himself contributed little to his history, and of that little there is next to nothing that a serious student of history can admire or respect. Livy thus shrinks to a shade or cipher. So pervasive and seductive is this attitude that on occasion the historian dwindles to

less than nothing, if such is possible. Even so good a critic as Nissen can commit such absurdities; for example, he writes in reference to chapter 49 of Book 42, where Livy describes the ceremonial departure from Rome of the first consul chosen to wage war against Perseus of Macedon: "The simplicity and graphic quality of the description betray Polybian authorship. In any case a foreigner must be the author, for that a Roman could have written this would be inconceivable: '*semper quidem ea res cum magna dignitate ac maiestate geritur.*'"<sup>15</sup>

An example of the same attitude on a larger scale is offered by Margarete Zimmerer in her monograph on the historian Claudius Quadrigarius. It is her judgment that Livy selected Claudius, Valerius Antias, and Polybius as his three chief (if not sole) sources for Books 31-45 because they contrasted nicely among themselves in types of material, narrative techniques, and styles. Livy endeavored to mirror faithfully their differences in all of these areas because by moving back and forth among them he could bring liveliness and variety to his narrative.<sup>16</sup> The author views this as a new and somewhat heretical approach—one that dares to take account of Livy's personal contribution and artistic aims; in fact, she chides some of her predecessors for treating Livy like an automaton and for attributing changes of source to considerations of content alone.<sup>17</sup> Now there may be an embryo of insight and truth in this notion; but in the form in which Zimmerer puts it, it seems

<sup>15</sup> KU 254: "Die Einfachheit und Anschaulichkeit der Schilderung verrät den Polybios. Sie gehört jedenfalls einem Fremden an; denn wie ein römischer Geschichtschreiber sie so hätte abfassen können, wäre unbegreiflich [*semper quidem ea res cum magna dignitate ac maiestate geritur eqs.*]."

<sup>16</sup> Zimmerer, CQ 41: "Darum glaube ich, dass die genannten drei Berichte nur dazu eingearbeitet sind, um in die Erzählungen etwas Leben und Abwechslung zu bringen"; 67: "Er macht sich auch hier die stilistischen Eigentümlichkeiten seiner Quellen für seine künstlerischen Zwecke zunutze."

<sup>17</sup> Zimmerer, CQ 22-24.



to be a step backward: even style and narrative techniques are not his own, but those of his sources, conscientiously made to appear in their native hues through the transparency.

The belief that Livy is capable of almost anything causes even the most judicious scholars to make hypotheses that in the case of another author would be considered extreme. In the account of Coriolanus in Book 2 (39. 1-6) there is a serious inconsistency in the text that is difficult to explain.<sup>18</sup> R. M. Ogilvie accounts for it in this way.<sup>19</sup> Livy began to describe Coriolanus' campaigns as they appeared in his source. Accordingly, he located Coriolanus in the vicinity of the Via Latina. But midway through the first sentence he halted and decided for the first time to read ahead in his source. It was then he discovered that Coriolanus was engaged in two separate campaigns. After some thought he decided to lump them together in order to achieve greater cohesion and unity; for economy's sake he chose to describe the second campaign, which took place along the Via Ardeatina, first. But he realized that in order to make geographical sense the order of the cities conquered in this campaign would have to be reversed, since he wanted to move Coriolanus closer to Rome, not away from it. All this was decided and planned halfway through the first sentence—which half he left as he had first written it, merely continuing the sentence in accordance with his new plan.

<sup>18</sup> 2. 39. 2-4: *Circeios profectus primum colonos inde Romanos expulit liberamque eam urbem Volscis tradidit; inde in Latinam viam transversis tramitibus transgressus, Satricum, Longulam, Poluscam, Coriolos, Mugillam (novellam: ms.), haec Romanis oppida ademūt; inde Lavinium recepit; tunc deinceps Corbionem, Veteliam, Tolerium (Trebium: ms.), Labicos, Pedum cepit.* The first list of cities (Satricum, etc.) is situated in the area of the Via Ardeatina, the second (Corbio, etc.) of the Via Latina. Conway in his OCT text transposed *inde in Latinam . . . transgressus* to a place after *Lavinium recepit*.

<sup>19</sup> *Comm.* 331-332 (the text as given in n. 18 is his).

## INTRODUCTION

Even granting that anything is possible in Livy, this hypothesis strains belief. Something is clearly wrong with the text or with the facts, but Ogilvie's is unlikely to be the true explanation. On the one hand we have a Livy so concerned with thematic unity that two campaigns are made into one; on the other, so ignorant of what lay ahead and so careless in writing that major changes are formulated in mid-sentence, the first part left untouched to clash with the last; so ignorant of geography that he thought Satricum, Longula, Polusca, Corioli, and Mugilla were all on the Via Latina; so knowledgeable that he realized their order as given in his source had to be reversed in order to move Coriolanus from south to north in his campaign.<sup>20</sup>

Part of the purpose of this book is to urge that Livy be approached in a more understanding and more cautious spirit than has sometimes been the case. The notions of Livy the wanderer, the transparency, the cipher, the man capable of almost anything, are extreme. Of the many charges leveled against him some are unfounded, some overstated, and some misdirected—most often because of a failure to perceive or appreciate the problems that Livy faced in the ongoing process of adapting and combining his sources; the unstated assumption in many of these criticisms is that there was a different and better way for him to proceed. But these "different and better" ways on analysis often turn out to be those of modern historical methods and criticism; they are not those of Livy's day. Some scholars airily dismiss the notion that the ancients are undeserving of being judged and sentenced on the basis of our modern code. They are wrong. The first task of the historian is to understand the milieu of the period he studies

<sup>20</sup> See the pertinent comments of R. S. Conway, *CQ* 4 (1910) 274-275, and G. Meyer, *Titii Livi Ab Urbe Condita. Libri I et II* (Basel 1944) 2. 39. 37. (p. 162). The fact that I differ with some of Ogilvie's conclusions (chiefly in regard to Livy's sources) is not to be taken as representative of my reaction as a whole. The *Commentary* is a masterly achievement; my debt to it will be everywhere apparent in this study.

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and to judge it on the basis of the ideas and standards of the time. On the other hand, some will think me much too hard on Livy here and there. Yet some of the charges leveled against him cannot be rebutted or reduced to less serious offenses; they seem to me to be true and well founded. Livy was an uneven writer, capable of great care and great carelessness in almost the same stroke of the pen; he was often hasty, sometimes mechanical, and sometimes bored by certain stretches of material that he felt obliged to plow through. Nor will it be claimed that he was one of the leading intellects of the ancient world. Livy was not a deep thinker, or even a very consistent thinker; but he was intelligent and ought to be treated as a thinking adult who had ideas concerning the subject he chose to write about. Nor will it be claimed that he is a master of structure on a par with a Vergil or a Tacitus. Although for most matters of fact and for many of interpretation he had to follow what his sources reported and although he did not possess the (mostly modern) critical tools to evaluate, select, and combine their various elements to form a version essentially of his own making, he was nevertheless still free to omit, expand, abridge, and change sources over long stretches; hence, it will be argued, he was able to impose a design and structure of his own on the larger units of his history. In this respect, I believe, he was in control of his sources, rather than an immovable victim caught in their toils. The structure, however, was not usually one of great complexity; it involved mostly the selection of features that lent themselves to full-scale development and by their placement at the start, center, and end of books and pentads gave special point or focus to the narrative. The traditional view, mentioned above, that Livy's chief contribution to his history was in the adaptation of individual scenes and episodes is probably true. This study would only claim that the matter does not end there.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Hellmann, *L-I* 60 n. 1, well and eloquently stressed the necessity of first appreciating the overall design of the history before proceeding to analyze its separate parts.

## INTRODUCTION

The first chapter will examine Livy's attempt to give design and structure to the larger units of his history: the pentad and multiples thereof, and, within the pentad, individual books and groups of books. Chapters II, III, and IV will present detailed analyses of Books 31-35, 36-40, and 41-45, respectively. The reason for choosing these books is that for them we have extensive extracts from one of Livy's chief sources: Polybius. A close comparison between the two historians will show the general way Livy has structured these books and some of the problems he encountered in adapting his sources, as well as some of the methods he used in attempting to solve these problems. Chapters V and VI are based on those that precede: the fifth examines Livy's use and attitude toward his sources generally throughout the history, the sixth the methods of work that he followed while preparing himself to write and during the actual business of composition. The last chapter will concentrate on Livy's views of historical change and development, particularly as they relate to the genesis and decline of the Roman national character; his overall design and his methods of composition were naturally affected by his conception of the seven hundred and fifty years of Roman history that he spent a lifetime writing about.



# LIVY

The Composition of His History



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## CHAPTER I

# The Structure of the History

### BOOKS 1-45

SCHOLARS are agreed that in the extant books, including the missing decade 11-20, Livy blocked out his material according to pentads and decades. Even those who picture him wandering through his sources, uncertain as to exactly what was coming up next, concede this. Nor has anyone ventured to posit imitation of a source; by common and tacit consent this structure is deemed to be the historian's own creation. Finally, there is little disagreement as to what the blocks of material are. By means of special prefaces, major points of departure, and climactic denouements Livy has marked the turning points so clearly that few have mistaken their way.

In the preface to Book 2 Livy looks back over the regal period and argues that it was a necessary prelude to the establishment of a stable Free Republic (1. 1-6). The first five books form a larger unit, as his preface to Book 6 makes clear (1. 1-3: *quinque libris exposui*). The Sack of Rome by the Gauls, which concludes the first pentad, marks a turning point for two reasons. The first concerns the reliability of the evidence. Prior to the sack written records (*una custodia fidelis memoriae rerum gestarum*) were brief and scanty, and most of those that had existed were destroyed in the conflagration; those early events were "obscure because of their great antiquity, like objects that are difficult to make out when seen from a long distance away."<sup>1</sup> The second reason is that Rome experienced a new founding. "As if from a root stock the city sprang up a second

<sup>1</sup> 6. 1. 2: *res . . . vetustate nimia obscuras, velut quae magno ex intervallo loci vix cernuntur.*



time in a more vigorous and flourishing growth."<sup>2</sup> The first fifteen books together formed a still greater unit, for in his preface to Book 31 (1. 1-5) Livy contrasts this *pars tanti operis* with the next fifteen books covering the Punic Wars. Book 16 appears to have had its own preface: *Origo Carthaginensium et primordia urbis eorum referuntur* is the first sentence of its Periocha; and Book 21 has a special introduction to the Hannibalic War. At the start of Rome's conquest of the East (31. 1. 1-5) Livy looks back upon the first thirty books and in some dismay confesses that he is beginning to realize the enormous dimensions of his promise to write the entire history of the Roman people: "I now see in my mind's eye . . . that my task is almost increasing, which as I finished each of the earlier parts I fancied was becoming shorter."<sup>3</sup> The next three pentads are dominated by successive wars in the East: 31 opens with the declaration of war against Philip V (with a special introduction: 31. 1. 6-10); 36, with that against Antiochus the Great; and 45 concludes with the defeat of Perseus and the end of the kingdom of Macedon.

Most scholars regard the prefaces as the prime indicators of the major divisions, and view each as a separate step in a simple linear progression: 1, 2-5, 6-15, 16-20, 21-30, 31-45. The structure, however, is somewhat more complex, as G. Wille has recently argued.<sup>4</sup> Livy contrasts early Roman history (Books 1-15) with the period of the Punic Wars (Books 16-30). The latter has two subordinate sections (16-20, 21-30). The former also has two (1-5, 6-15), of which the first is further subdivided, each with a preface of its own (1, 2-5). The last three pentads (31-40) concern Rome's conquest of the East. Prefaces, then, do seem to mark off the three major sections and most (but not all) of their subordinate parts; the assumption that they indicate units of

<sup>2</sup> 6. 1. 3: *velut ab stirpibus laetius feraciusque renatae urbis.*

<sup>3</sup> *Iam provideo animo . . . crescere paene opus, quod prima quaeque perficiendo minui videbatur.*

<sup>4</sup> Wille, *Aufbau*, passim.

publication as well is attractive.<sup>5</sup> But this was not their sole use, for they could begin individual books or could stand within them. Book 39, for example, has a preface of its own (1. 1-8); later at 23. 5-24. 13 the coming war with Perseus has a special introduction.<sup>6</sup>

The notion that the decade is Livy's chief unit of composition has at times wrongly obscured the picture.<sup>7</sup> It is clear that in late antiquity his work was copied out and cited according to decades.<sup>8</sup> But this conception does not go back

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Nissen, *RhM* 27 (1872) 542; Walsh, *Livy* 6-7. There is no evidence that the opening of Book 41, which is lacking in our sole surviving manuscript, contained a preamble of its own: so Bayet, *Livre I* xiii. I do not understand P. A. Stadter's remark, *Historia* 21 (1972) 291, that "the loss of the beginning of XLI denies us the preamble which we might have expected to clarify the structure of the *preceding* books" (italics added). No preamble is required at the start of 41; the death of Philip at the end of 40 (57. 2 ff.) and the repeated foreshadowing of the Third Macedonian War (from 39. 23. 5 ff.) make it clear where the narrative has been and where it is going; cf. Jal, *Livres XLI-XLII* xiv; Wille, *Aufbau* 21-23. That the history was published in parts would be an inevitable supposition even if we did not have evidence for it. The first book dates between 27 and 25 B.C.: the emperor has the title Augustus (voted on Jan. 16, 27), but the second closing of the temple of Janus during his reign in 25 is not mentioned (1. 19. 2-3). The writing of the first book or pentad may even have been completed some years before: see Luce, *TAPhA* 96 (1965) 209-240. The superscription to the Periocha of Book 121 tells us that Books 121-142 were published after the death of Augustus in A.D. 14.

<sup>6</sup> It concerns the long-range causes of the war (185 B.C.: thirteen years away at this point) and is based on Polybius (cf. 22. 18 [8], 6 [9]). The Samnite wars are briefly introduced in the middle of Book 7 (29. 1-2). Book 109 opened with a discussion of the causes and beginnings of the civil war between Pompey and Caesar—doubtless cast in the form of a preface.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. R. E. A. Palmer, *RFIC* 99 (1971) 406, n. 3. Jal, *Livres XLI-XLII* vii-xviii, discusses the problem fully and cautiously. Despite his caution, I cannot agree with the conclusion that the decade 41-50 formed a unit such as 21-30. See pp. 135-137.

<sup>8</sup> Pope Gelasius in a letter of A.D. 496 writes: *Livius secunda decade loquitur . . .* (CSEL 35, p. 457, line 6 = frg. 63 of Livy). Bayet, *Livre*

to the historian himself, who refers only to *libri* (6. 1. 1: *quinque libris*), *partes* (21. 1. 1, 31. 1. 2), and *volumina*,<sup>9</sup> and it takes no account of major divisions in the middle of decades: Books 6, 16, 36, and 45. Bayet is probably correct in supposing that the later division of his work by decades satisfied the copyists' desire for manuscript units of roughly equal size and that the specific choice of ten was suggested by the historian's preference for writing in pentads or multiples thereof.<sup>10</sup>

Livy's basic structural unit was therefore the pentad. Sometimes it could stand quite independently (Books 1-5, for example) and sometimes a pair of pentads formed the dominant unit (6-15, 21-30). Whether he intended to create a noticeable break halfway through all decade units is disputed. The majority opinion is that such a break exists between 25 and 26 but not between 10 and 11.<sup>11</sup>

The structure of Books 1-45 is thus something more than blocks of five and ten books strung out one after the other. Symmetry and subordination are present. Three sections of equal length mark out the chief phases of Roman history down to 167: Early Rome (Books 1-15), The Punic Wars (Books 16-30), The Conquest of the East (Books 31-45). The subdivisions of the first two parts are also parallel: 1-5 form a separate division, as do 16-20, each of which is fol-

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*I* xvi, n. 1, suspects that some of the Nicomachean manuscripts may have been copied in units of five.

<sup>9</sup> 10. 31. 10: *per quartum iam volumen*; 31. 1. 3; *aequa multa volumina* (i.e. two sets of fifteen).

<sup>10</sup> Bayet, *Livre I* xv-xvi.

<sup>11</sup> Stadter, *Historia* 21 (1972) 294, advocates a break between 10 and 11; denied by Wille, *Aufbau* 54-56; by E. Burck, "Zum Rombild des Livius: Interpretationen zur zweiten Pentade," *AU* 3 (1957) 37; repr. *Vom Menschenbild in der römischen Literatur*, ed. E. Lefèvre (Heidelberg 1966) 323-324; and by Syme, *HSPb* 64 (1959) 30. On the structure of 21-30 and the break between Books 25 and 26, see Burck, *Einführung* 7-56, summarized in his article on the third decade in *Livy*, ed. T. A. Dorey (London and Toronto 1971) 21-46; it is recapitulated briefly, with approval, by Wille, *Aufbau* 48-53.

## STRUCTURE OF THE HISTORY

lowed by a unit of ten books. The last group is composed of three equal units, the first element of which balances the last in the sequence Macedon-Syria-Macedon; note the introduction to the war with Philip at 31. 1. 6-10 and Livy's "epitaph" on the kingdom of Macedon at 45. 9. 2-7.<sup>12</sup>

1-15: Early Rome	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} 1-5: \text{ From the Founding} \\ \text{to the Sack} \\ 6-15: \text{ The Conquest of Italy} \end{array} \right.$	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} 1: \text{ The Regal Period} \\ 2-5: \text{ The Early Republic} \end{array} \right.$
16-30: The Punic Wars	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} 16-20: \text{ The First Punic War} \\ 21-30: \text{ The Second Punic War} \end{array} \right.$	
31-45: The Conquest of the East	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} 31-35: \text{ The War with Philip V} \\ 36-40: \text{ The War with Antiochus} \\ 41-45: \text{ The War with Perseus} \end{array} \right.$	

How far in advance did Livy sketch out this large-scale structure? Since his original intention was to write the whole of Roman history down to his own times (Praef., esp. 4; cf. 31. 1. 2), Nissen tended to the belief that he blocked out the general scheme for the entire history at the start.<sup>13</sup> He has found few adherents. Wölfflin and Klotz (among others)<sup>14</sup> cite as a counter argument the introduction to Book 31, where Livy confesses that he is only now beginning to realize the immensity of his task and compares himself to one who wades into the shallows by the seashore only to be carried out over his head "into depths more vast and,

<sup>12</sup> Wille's view that Books 31-45 comprise a Macedonian *Pentekaidecade* is oversimplified (*Aufbau* 9). The war with Antiochus is as major as either the Second or Third Macedonian Wars, and the great center section of which it is a part has little to do with Macedon: the war with Philip is finished by the middle of 33, the coming conflict with Perseus is not introduced until 39. 23. 5-24. 13, while the outbreak comes at 42. 30. 8 ff.

<sup>13</sup> *RhM* 27 (1872) 542-543. Cited with approval by T. Birt, *Das antike Buchwesen* (Berlin 1882) 136-137.

<sup>14</sup> E. Wölfflin, *Philologus* 33 (1874) 146-147; A. Klotz, *RE* 25 (1926) s. v. Livius, 820; cf. Briscoe, *Comm.* 51; Tränkle, *WS N.S.* 2 (1968) 136-137; Jal, *Livres XLI-XLII* xi-xii.